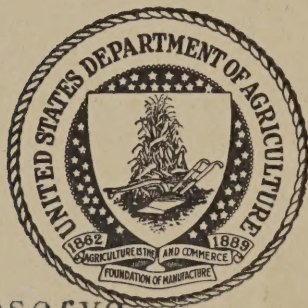


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INFORMATION SERVES THE WHOLE FARM LABOR PROGRAM

by
Elton K. Hanks*

Information is a part of our work in New York State. It seems unnecessary to have to discuss an information person as a part of the farm labor staff. We have just accepted it.

We want to create a change in our extension work. It is the same so far as I can see with our farm labor program. We want farmers to do things, we want to create changes in their practices. We want to stimulate them. We want to have other people, the general public, informed about what we are doing, so that if they haven't anything to contribute at least they don't get in the way. All of this, well informed opinions, good judgment, depends upon accurate information. We have put emphasis on trying to keep people informed. We feel that keenly, but the other reason for using information seems to be the most important. A third thing that we don't do too well, but we at least admit faults, and realize that we should be doing it better, is keeping our administrators informed of what we are doing. We have a real responsibility I feel in the State to let Mr. Wilson know what our program is other than sending what he asks for. We realize the Washington office should be kept informed. Our director of extension, our dean, and other people on our campus should know what is doing in our particular field. After all they are responsible for it. They delegated responsibility to us but they have to support us.

The job really starts with an information person about now, when our general policy is established and within it work out the policy for New York State. We will finish our program. Our real plan of action will be developed within the next few weeks, then the information person gets really busy. We think people all over New York State should know what the policy is in connection with farm labor, what the program is, and all about it. Currently they should be kept informed with progress on the program and they should know the results. Some think that an information person is a propagandist, perhaps in a sense they are, but that is not the sense that we treat them in New York State. It is our primary responsibility to handle facts and to get facts before the public and before the people who can use them. If that information person is on his or her job, she or he will enlist the support of the staff first. She will see that the staff realizes all the avenues for reaching people with their subject matter. She will keep reminding that busy person who has the subject matter of things that he should be doing to get his work before the people who can do something about it. At our first conference of farm labor assistants, county agents, and others working on this program, we plan as a very definite part of it a session with our own farm labor person and with the head of the department of information in extension teaching, trying to create in those people an appreciation of the value of doing this information job and telling them something about how to do it, how to write,

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how to talk, how to take pictures, a little of all that. She tries to get, as any good worker does, other people to do her job for her as much as possible. We know that the best place to reach people is locally in the county. Your material can be reorganized. She tries first to get the farm labor assistant to recognize the problem and the value of information. She helps them with press articles. One of the most important things that she has done is to encourage those county agents and those labor assistants to use a thing which they have right in their office or near their office, and that is what is known as the farm bureau news; published by and for the organization in our State which sponsors extension service and the county agent has access to it. She supplies stories of a general nature to each of these counties for inclusion in this news and supplies ideas. We do work with farm magazines, trade papers, organization sheets. It is a wonderful way of reaching people at a relatively low cost. We use the radio of course, everyone uses it now. Possibly 23 or 24 stations fairly regularly. She can remind them occasionally of this way of reaching people. It would be too bad to overlook that possibility.

We have at the college a regular information department in addition to the one we have in our own division that we cooperate with. They send out radio briefs to all the stations - rather fill-ins. Part of our information person's job is to write those paragraphs. We have service letters through all our regular departments - animal husbandry, 4-H, poultry, etc.

The meetings being held over the State, particularly at this season of the year, offer an opportunity to get information to farmers about our part of the job. The best way that we can see of getting that information out through that means is to create in the county agent, and particularly in his farm labor assistant, the urge to do something about this information and he will arrange to get on that program or go at least for an exhibit. Possibly there is an hour or 10 minutes when he could show some slides -- that is very acceptable. Our information person has the job of anticipating all of this thing, of having slides prepared, of taking pictures first and making them into slides and making them available to the county agents. There are grange meetings to which this type of information can be passed out. There are other types of meetings. There is the matter of posters. I am sure if we didn't have an information person on our staff I wouldn't know what was available. It is so tied up with our regular work that we just don't think about it anymore. She assists every member of our staff. She reminds him that here is a subject of yours, a project you have. An information person gives balance to our program.

